

Story of the Burong Geruda and the Raja Merong Mahawangsa.

BY HON. R. N. BLAND FROM THE KEDAH ANNALS.

After the war of Sri Rama and Raja Handuman, the Island of Langka Puri was deserted except by the bird "Geruda." The Geruda was a descendant of Raja Dewa. He was exceedingly wise and powerful. All birds and beasts feared him.

One day the Eagle came and said to him "Has the news reached you O Geruda that the Raja of Rum is going to marry his son to the daughter of the Emperor of China? These countries are very far apart, one at the rising, the other at the setting of the Sun; the sultan is sending his son with a mighty fleet. They are even now weighing anchor and setting sail. The Cockatoo gave me the news. He saw the messengers who went backwards and forwards. Then I the Eagle flew upwards and saw that his report was true." Then said the Geruda to the Eagle "Such arrogance can not be allowed and I will consult the Nabi Suleiman about it." So the Geruda flew to the throne of the Nabi Suleiman and told him what he had heard about the marriage of the prince and princess saying that such a match was not meet or fitting the countries being so far apart. Said the Nabi: "If it is the will of Allah, no one can separate them." Then said the Geruda: "Give me this task and if I do not succeed let me be banished from the sky, and the earth, and all abodes of men." "Be it so," replied the Nabi, "do what is in your power with this condition that you must tell me whatever you do." Bowing before the throne, the bird Geruda promised and departed.

He flew far over the sea to the land of China. There he saw the princess playing in a garden with a companion and

female servants. He swooped down, and carried off the princess and two attendants in his talons to the Island of Langka Puri. He placed them in his house and went off to find food for them. And whatever the Princess wished for, that did the bird Geruda obtain for her.

Now the Sultan (Raja) of Rum assembled the princes who stood crowned before him, together with his wise men and his officers and his guards and all his vassals in the great hall of his court and declared to them his intention of sending his son to the land of China. He commanded an expedition to be got ready with a fleet and enquired who he could trust to take his place as leader.

Now his friend Raja Merong Mahawangsa who was a royal prince, and who had married a princess sprung from the Indra and Gergasi fairies and Genii was present. He was esteemed very wise and valiant among all the Rajas. To him said the Raja of Rum: "Oh brother! will you go to marry my son to the daughter of the Chinese Emperor?" Then the Raja Merong Mahawangsa bowed low and said that he would do whatever his lord commanded.

Thus the ships were made ready, many vessels and kechis to accompany the prince. Then on a favourable day they took leave and made for the open sea.

So with anchors weighed and sails set they followed the ship (bhatra) of the prince, one half of Raja Merong Mahawangsa fleet behind, one half in front to lead the way to the Celestial land.

For a long time their voyage lay past the countries tributary to the great Raja of Rum, and from many broad rivers and from headlands, kings came to bring provisions and gifts to them. In course of time they came to the land of the Hindoos. There many strange and wondrous sights met their eyes. And they doubled many headlands and sailed through many bays, the appearance of their fleet being like a flock of birds seeking their nest, their masts like a forest of pepara trees, and

the whole sea resounded with the noise of their gongs and music.

Now when they had sailed as far as Kuala Chingkong, the name of whose Raja was Klanggi, the face of the sun became darkened, and it seemed as if a storm were about to descend on them.

The ships drew near together, and the Raja Merong Mahawangsa going up on deck with his weapons saw that it was not a storm but an immense bird coming down on them, whose wings made a noise like the rushing of a hurricane.

For two days the fight with the bird Geruda went on. The ships received it with volleys of arrows and cannon shots. Raja Merong Mahawangsa on the first day brought forth his bow "Aiyounan" and the wondrous flame-tipped arrows. These he sent hustling into the air, and straightway they speed with a noise like rolling thunder, as it were a mountain come down, to overwhelm the Geruda, but he swiftly flying evaded them. Neither cared he for the other missiles, they glanced off harmlessly and fell into the sea, neither could Raja Merong Mahawangsa hit him on account of his swiftness.

On the second day the bird Geruda attacked again. In vain did Raja Merong Mahawangsa draw against him the bow *Bran Pura*. The fire-tipped arrows flew upwards with a noise like thunder and causing darkness as a storm of wind and rain, but they were all lost, nothing could wound the Geruda, even with the assistance of the Genii and air sprites. With beak and talons he seized six ships, scattering their crews into the sea, or letting them fall on the land.

Then night came on, and the ships clustered together for mutual defence during the night. In the morning they repaired their shattered rigging and searched for some trace of their companions. But the sea gave up nothing, so after many days they sailed on. And when they had traced the mouth of the river, whose name is Marib, again they perceived a terrible darkness growing in the sky with a noise of wind and rain and fearful roaring. Then their hearts sank, but nevertheless they moored the ships and prepared to once more receive the Geru-

da with missiles and arrows. These, as before, were of no avail. When the Raja Merong Mahawangsa saw that the Geruda was coming down on them, he took his third bow, whose name was *Perasa Simpani Gambera*, and putting one of his flame tipped arrows to the string he said "O *Perasa Simpani Gambera*, go forth and destroy the Geruda." Then the arrow flew through the clouds and straightway a troop of Jins and Shaitans appeared to assist against the Geruda. But the bird cared not for them nor was his heart daunted. Swooping down he carried off many ships in his beak and claws, either plunging their crews into the sea or dashing them down amongst the lofty forest trees, so that their bodies were scattered in fragments and utterly destroyed.

At this great was the anger of the Raja Merong Mahawangsa. With another arrow he shot at the Geruda, and the sky and sea were filled with a noise like rolling thunder. This time the arrow took the form of the bird Jentaigu, rushing to attack the bird Geruda. Now ensued a desperate struggle, the birds fighting with beak and talons. At last the Jentaigu was overcome by the flames breathed out by the Geruda, and, as an arrow, returned to the quiver of Raja Merong Mahawangsa. Thus night fell and the fleet was for a time left unmolested by the bird Geruda. And in the morning seeing that the Geruda did not come, they weighed anchor and sailed on. And after sailing for several days they arrived at *Pulau Selang*. In the meantime the Geruda had retired to a lofty mountain and was planning how to destroy the whole fleet, for he feared Raja Merong Mahawangsa, who was indeed the bravest and most skilful chief of his time.

Now when the fleet had reached the Island of Selang, they stood in need of wood and water and Raja Merong Mahawangsa was deputed by the Prince to land and fetch it, while the rest of the fleet sailed on. And sailing on they came to the Island of Langka Puri. There, during the night time, they were attacked by the Geruda who had no longer to fear Raja Merong Mahawangsa. The fleet was utterly destroyed. The Prince however, survived. He found himself floating on the

water, clinging to a loose plank alone in the wide sea, without food, at the mercy of wind and waves.

When Raja Merong Mahawangsa had taken in wood and water, he set sail to rejoin the Prince at day break. Presently he came to the spot where the Geruda had destroyed the fleet. There he found a few men still swimming about, these he picked up and learned from them what had happened. For many days he searched for the Prince, then not finding him he sailed on with his people till they reached the Islands named Seraya, Jambul and Lada. A little further on lay the mainland for with they steered. There the Raja landed and was welcomed by the Genii and other supernatural inhabitants of that land. They at length invited the Raja to become their ruler by reason of his valour and the nobleness of his language. There they built a palace and a fortress for him, and his people, with their wives and families formed a kampong or village around. And in a short time the kingdom thus founded became prosperous and powerful. Many people came to settle amongst them and from all lands to trade with them.

In the meantime, the Prince was left swimming alone in the sea on his plank.

For several days he drifted, borne along by winds and currents. He had neither food nor drink, the sun beat on him, the waves buffeted him, his body became all covered over with mussels and limpets. At last he was washed ashore on the shore of Langka Puri. Lying in a cranny of the rocks, he was too exhausted to speak or move, he could only groan.

Now the Chinese Princess with her attendants had been carried off to this very Island of Langka Puri by the Geruda, and it happened that when the Prince of Rum was thrown upon the coast, the Geruda was away finding food, while the Princess and her nurse had come down to the shore to look for shells and crabs and coral; suddenly they heard a noise of groaning, and the Princess bade her nurse go and see what the noise was. She was terribly frightened when looking over some rocks she saw a strange thing like a man, but with a body all covered with sea weeds and limpet. She did not stay to

look twice, but ran straight back to the Princess to tell her what she had seen. She declared she could not tell whether it were a man or an evil spirit. Then the Princess smiled and bade her go back and not be afraid, but find out whether it were a man or not and bring back word. So the nurse went and took courage to approach and speak to the Prince, who slowly and with difficulty told her who he was and what had happened to him. When the nurse heard this she felt very sorry for him and returning told the Princess. Then the Princess was glad indeed and with the help of the two attendants she bore the poor Prince and hid him in a cave lest the Geruda should find him, and she told the nurse to give him a bath and scrape the shells off his body and to be careful not to give him rice at first, but only rice water until his stomach should be stronger. And towards evening they piled up stones before the cave and left him for fear the Geruda should find him on its return.

Now it was the Geruda's custom to leave the Island of Langka Puri every morning in search of food, returning only at nightfall; thus it was possible for the Princess's attendants to visit the Prince in his cave every day, to nurse him and bring him food. And after a short time the Prince recovered, and the nurse reported to her mistress that he was superior to the princes of all other countries in appearance and manners, but that he was sadly in want of clothes. So the Princess thought of a plan. When the Geruda returned at evening she addressed him, "Oh, my father, you have brought us here and are always taking pains to get us what we want, but there is something more I wish for. I have left all my clothes behind. There is in my father's palace in China a room set round with mirrors, and in it a chest hinged with ivory and set with emeralds. In this chest are all my clothes. Will you, oh father, go and get it for me?" The Geruda replied that he would gladly and immediately set out.

So the Geruda flew away till he came near the Emperor's palace when he caused a storm of wind and rain and darkness to come on which shook the whole building and roared horrib-

ly overhead. Then the Emperor and his great men who were feasting inside were terribly frightened. They began to tremble, and no man knew what to do or what was going to happen. However, the Geruda did not do them any harm, but simply pulled down part of the wall of the palace and put in his head and seized the box as the Princess had told him, and flew away with it back to Langka Puri. The Princess was not a little glad to get back her box; she pulled out all the things and looked at them and choosing some of the best she gave them to her nurse to take to the Prince, as soon as the Geruda should be out of the way.

At last the Prince was fit to meet the Princess, and dressed out in his fine clothes like a Raja the Princess thought she had never seen a young Prince like him.

So they embraced and kissed each other, and sat hand in hand, dreading the time when they would have to separate for fear of the Geruda. But there was no help for it—at evening they had to go, both weeping and lamenting their sad condition. Thus day after day, till at last the Geruda told the Princess that he was going to present himself before the Nabi Suleiman and that she must behave well in his absence. When after flying for many days, the Geruda arrived before the throne of the Nabi Suleiman bending low he told him how he had prevented the marriage of the son of the Sultan of Rum with the daughter of the Emperor of China, and whatever else had happened. Then said the Nabi: "But suppose the Prince of Rum should be alive, what then O Geruda?" The Geruda answered: "Should this be so and the Prince meet the Princess O Nabi, let the former vow take effect, let me depart from all the habitations of men and from beneath the sky, and from the face of the round world." At this the Nabi smiled and bade him who ruled over the Imps or Spirits and whose name was Herman Shah take 100 of his Imps and mentris and fly off to Langka Puri, to seize whomsoever they might find there, put them into a large box and bring them back at once. On their return, the Nabi ordered the box to be opened in his presence and that of the Geruda. Out came the Prince of Rum, the Princess of China and the two attendants!

Then said the Nabi Suleiman to the Geruda; "Listen O Geruda, and all ye Rajas, warriors and subjects. From this ye may learn that whatever Allah has decreed will surely come to pass. He provides for all mankind, and watches over their affairs and because, O Geruda you have not believed this and have tried to thwart the design of Allah with regard to the son of the Raja of Rum and the daughter of the Raja of China, I now banish you to the sea called Kolzum (Red Sea) to which mankind cannot approach."

The Geruda replied: "If this is the command of the Nabi Suleiman, I obey," and straightway he flew away in the direction of the Sea of Kolzum where he remains to this day.

Then the Nabi Suleiman commanded his mentris to prepare letters in the language of the Imps addressed to the Raja of Rum and the Emperor of China, to inform them of all that had happened to their children, and at the wish of the Prince of Rum he directed the Raja to recall Raja Merong Mahawangsa who had founded a Kingdom on the Island of Seraya. The letters having been written and addressed in the proper style, the Nabi commanded Hermanshah to proceed with his jins and mentris to the Court of the Emperor of China taking the Prince and Princess and their attendants with them.

Now the Emperor of China was in his Hall of Audience, consulting with his mentris and chief officers, hulubalangs, sidasidas etc., as to what reply should be sent back to the Raja of Rum by the messengers who had come to obtain news of the Prince and Princess. Suddenly the Mangkabumi (Chamberlain) saw Herman Shah, the Raja of the Jins appearing on the threshold. Going forward great was his surprise to learn his name and mission. Taking him by the hand he led him before the Emperor who rose from his seat as a sign of honour. Then Herman Shah presented the letters from the Nabi Suleiman and caused the box containing the Prince and Princess to be brought before His Majesty. The letter having been honoured with all proper ceremony, it was read out by the Mangkabumi. And when the letters had been read the box was opened and the Prince and Princess appeared before the Emperor. Then was

the Emperor glad, he kissed and embraced his daughter and was highly delighted with the appearance of the young Prince. So a feast was prepared and all the Jins and ambassadors and nobles were entertained, and the Emperor sent word throughout all his Empire and its tributaries to prepare to celebrate the marriage of the Prince and Princess as the Nabi Suleiman had commanded. And the ambassadors were directed to return to inform the Raja of Rum of the happy ending of his son's adventures.